

Unanswered Questions: What the September Eleventh Families Asked and the 9/11 Commission Ignored — an Excerpt

By Ray McGinnis

Research Note

On the twentieth anniversary of the attacks of September Eleventh, I published *Unanswered Questions: What the September Eleventh Families Asked and the 9/11 Commission Ignored*. As I wrote my manuscript, I viewed the testimony of 9/11 family members and other witnesses at the public hearings of the 9/11 Commission. I read several dozen books, watched many documentaries and public forums, and read the press releases of the Family Steering Committee for the 9/11 Independent Commission (FSC). I read thousands of news stories related to 9/11, including many hundreds of news stories, op-eds, and letters to the editor which highlighted views by different family members, close friends and first responders. And I was in communication with a dozen people who were variously family members, friends, or colleagues of those who died on Sept. 11. I read over 12,000 pages of the transcripts of oral testimony given by 503 first responders of the FDNY who were involved in rescue efforts at the World Trade Center. In my book, the excerpt below, which is the book's concluding chapter, is preceded by an introduction and 24 chapters, all referenced with 910 endnotes.

Unanswered Questions is divided into four parts. Part one discusses the shift from grief to advocacy as families pressed their government for an investigation into the attacks. Part two showcases the efforts of the FSC, who provided the 9/11 Commission over a thousand questions to aid a successful investigation — seventy percent of which were ignored by the inquiry. Part two also highlights problems the families witnessed as they tried to keep the inquiry on track. Part three focuses on eleven of the twelve questions that I discuss in my book that the 9/11 Commission ignored. Part four showcases families that either accept the official account, suspect a cover-up, or believe their government is complicit. Part four also looks at efforts to launch a new investigation, various legal actions, and reports of explosions in the towers.

For more information about the Family Steering Committee for the 9/11 Independent Commission visit: <https://www.911independentcommission.org>.

Ray McGinnis

"I think the basic facts here indicate that these attacks occurred as a consequence of a conspiracy."

~ Bob Kerrey, 9/11 Commissioner

The story of the 9/11 Commission raises a fundamental question: can governments investigate themselves? The purpose articulated on the US Senate floor in December, 2001, by Senator Joe Lieberman was the need "to understand what happened without preconceptions about its ultimate finding." However, prior to the first public hearings, Executive Director Philip Zelikow co-wrote

a chapter-by-chapter outline of what the Report would find. Family Steering Committee members expressed concern that the investigation avoided following any leads that conflicted with the outline's assumptions. When staff from one 9/11 Commission team submitted a report portraying Condoleezza Rice's performance as "amount[ing] to incompetence, or something not far from it," Zelikow vetoed its inclusion. [1]

Over half of the 9/11 commissioners stated after the inquiry that it was either "set up to fail," or part of "a cover-up." They believed NORAD officials lied to them, and many wanted the DOJ to prosecute the organization. CIA Director George Tenet also lied in testimony before the Commission. The most publicly-defiant member of the 9/11 Commission was Max Cleland. Highly critical of the White House's stonewalling, as well as Chairmen Thomas Kean and Lee Hamilton's failure to issue subpoenas, Cleland said the Commission was "compromised." Subsequently, Kean and Hamilton worked to get Cleland appointed to the Export-Import Bank, forcing his resignation. [2]

When commissioners toured to present and sell the Report's findings, members of the general public were told in answer to almost every question, "that's classified information." Janette Mackinlay's apartment across from WTC4 was saturated by the dust from the imploding towers. She attended a gathering in San Francisco to hear 9/11 commissioners present their Report. The general public was invited to hear the commissioners "provide the fullest possible account of the events surrounding 9/11." [3] At a presentation at UC Davis, MacKinlay reflected on the 9/11 Commissioners Q&A at the Commonwealth Club in San Francisco. "As a matter of fact, there were no answers. Every answer to every question at the Question-and-Answer period was the same answer. And that answer was 'that's classified information.' Everything was classified. The issue that bothered me the most was that there was no accountability ... The Commissioners themselves said the 'Commission was set up to fail.'" [4]

However, after initial critiques of the Report, the media chose to regard it as "definitive." 9/11 family members who expressed disappointment with the Report became persona non grata; the press wasn't interested in exploring questions the Report left unanswered.

When the press did acknowledge the existence of people questioning the Report, it painted dissenters as "conspiracy theorists," including 9/11 family members. The dictionary defines a theorist as "someone who considers given facts and comes up with a possible explanation." The 9/11 Commission Report failed to consider many of the given facts. In the face of its many omissions, Lorie Van Auken said, "if there are conspiracy theories out there then it is the government's fault, because they did not ever really explain, or show, or want us to know what happened." Bob Kerrey, who replaced Max Cleland on the 9/11 Commission, stated in 2008, "I think the basic facts here indicate that these attacks occurred as a consequence of a conspiracy." [5]

In 2008, Swiss historian Daniele Ganser told a Swiss audience that a conspiracy is "a secret agreement between two or more persons to engage in a criminal act. As 9/11 was a criminal act which was definitely not planned or carried out by one single person alone, but by at least two or more persons who agreed on the plan before it was implemented, 9/11 must be classified as a conspiracy." [6] Ganser contended that both the official conspiracy theory offered by the 9/11

Commission (that the attacks were a surprise) and dissenting narratives (that the government had foreknowledge and let it happen, or that elements within the government made it happen) must be evaluated based on the best evidence.

In 2016, a former co-chair of the Joint Intelligence Committee, Senator Bob Graham, told Real News Network reporter Paul Jay, “I no longer use the words cover up to describe what’s going on. I find more accurate the words aggressive deception. The federal government has attempted to rewrite the narrative of 9/11 in order to exclude the role of the Saudis from that horrific story.” [7]

Once the 9/11 Commission was disbanded, 9/11 family members disagreed over whether the Report was definitive, whether it pointed to a cover-up, government complicity, or whether its omissions justify the need for a new investigation. For some, it was hard enough to have to deal with the grief of losing loved ones from a terrorist attack. The spectacle of a government resisting any attempt to investigate the attacks, stonewalling the investigation, and starving the inquiry for necessary funds to succeed was sobering for many families. Yet, other 9/11 family members wanted only to trust their government’s allegations and looked to the Report as definitive.

Some September Eleventh family members attended the open hearings of the 9/11 Commission. Most relied on media coverage to make sense of the inquiry. And many September Eleventh family members bought copies of the Report and subsequently drew their conclusions.

Since its publication, well over half of the 9/11 families agreed with the findings of the 9/11 Commission. One of the Family Steering Committee for the 9/11 Independent Commission members, Carie Lemack, went on to become a fellow with the Council on Foreign Relations and serves as a member of the Homeland Security Advisory Council. [8] In a 2011 interview, Lemack said, “Osama bin Laden killed not just three thousand people on 9/11, but he’s killed people in East Africa, he’s killed people in Jordan, Pakistan and Indonesia.” Ten years after the attacks of September Eleventh, Lemack didn’t want to focus on “the perpetrators like bin Laden,” but on victims like her mom. [9]

Nearly two decades after the attacks, 70% of the questions the Family Steering Committee asked remain unanswered. These include questions posed to the following individuals and organizations:

- The North American Aerospace Defense Command (NORAD)
- The Federal Aviation Administration (FAA)
- The Central Intelligence Agency (CIA)
- New York Mayor Rudy Giuliani
- President George W. Bush
- New York City Port Authority
- Vice President Dick Cheney
- Secretary of Defense Donald Rumsfeld

Reflecting on the work of the 9/11 Commission, Chairman Thomas Kean said of the Family

Steering Committee, “I doubt very much we would be in existence without them.” [10] However, two decades after family members lobbied to have an investigation, many ordinary citizens are either unaware, or only vaguely aware that these families had anything to do with the 9/11 Commission. Of course, a majority of Americans don’t remember much about the 9/11 Commission itself. And for many, the events of September Eleventh still have a traumatizing impact. Many just don’t want to know.

Mindy Kleinberg contended in her testimony before the 9/11 Commission that it was wrong to presume that the terrorists were lucky. She said luck happens once or twice, not over and over again. The events related to the day of the attacks involved an ever-growing list of coincidences. Some of these have been discussed in this book:

- Coincidentally, President George W. Bush remained in an elementary school classroom reading a story about a pet goat, while Secret Service and other White House personnel failed to promptly remove him, in case he was a terrorist target in that first chaotic hour after the North Tower was struck and America was caught by surprise. [11]
- Coincidentally, Vice President Dick Cheney’s story, about where he was on the morning of the attacks, was contradicted by multiple sources who saw him at the Presidential Emergency Operations Center over a half an hour before he claimed to have arrived. [12]
- Coincidentally, no one in the US military thought to contact the Secretary of Defense, Donald Rumsfeld, and alert him that four planes had been hijacked and one was headed for the Pentagon. Consequently, we are told that the Secretary of Defense remained at his desk until the crash all the while remaining in the dark about the national emergency that was unfolding. [13]
- Coincidentally, the major area destroyed when the Pentagon was struck was the accounting/audit area, killing most of the auditors who were investigating the missing \$2.3 trillion from the Pentagon’s budget. [14]
- Coincidentally, the United States military was engaged in five separate war game exercises on the morning of 9/11, with simulated phantom planes on live radar screens confusing radar operators. [15]
- Coincidentally, the FAA Hijack Coordinator, Lieutenant General Mike Canavan, who was in charge of running training exercises in 2001 that were almost identical to the attacks that took place, was in Puerto Rico on the morning of September Eleventh, and it was unclear if he was replaced while he was away. [16]
- Coincidentally, the United States military was unable to follow any of its standard protocols to intercept hijacked planes for 109 minutes, even though it routinely intercepts any flight two miles off its approved flight path hundreds of times a year with military precision. [17]
- Coincidentally, the head of the Joint Chiefs of Staff, General Richard Myers, was in a meeting at the US Senate with Senator Max Cleland and recalled “nobody informed us” that the South Tower was hit and there was a national emergency. Myers said he was still on Capitol Hill when

the Pentagon was hit, though this is contradicted by Richard Clarke who claims Myers was already at the Pentagon in a teleconference by 9:10 a.m. [18]

- Coincidentally, seven months after the attacks of September eleventh, General Richard Myers, when asked about progress in capturing Osama bin Laden, said “Well the goal has never been to get bin Laden.... You may have more effect by going after the middlemen, because they’re harder to replace.” [19]
- Coincidentally, NORAD Commander in Chief, General Ralph Eberhart, set the Infocon alert levels to defend the Pentagon at its least protective level the night before the attacks. [20]
- Coincidentally, after the South Tower was struck and he believed a plane was possibly headed for the Sears Tower in Chicago, and another plane was headed toward the White House, NORAD Commander in Chief, General Eberhart, decided to take a drive around 9:30 a.m. (EST) for 45 minutes and was unreachable, having concluded that things had “quieted down.” [21]
- Coincidentally, at 8:50 a.m. CIA Director George Tenet was certain the crash into the North Tower represented a terrorist attack by Osama bin Laden. However, Tenet didn’t think to have the World Trade Center or Port Authority informed of his convictions and have them order an immediate evacuation. [22]
- Coincidentally, New York City Mayor Rudy Giuliani told the press 15 minutes before the South Tower collapsed that he was informed steel-frame skyscrapers were going to catastrophically collapse for the first time in history, but made no effort to inform first responders of his foreknowledge. [23]
- Coincidentally, soon to be named co-chairman of the Joint Inquiry, Porter Goss was meeting in Washington DC on the morning of September Eleventh with the head of Pakistani Secret Service, General Mahmood Ahmed. It was Ahmed who was reported in the press to have wired over \$100,000 to the alleged ringleader of the terrorist plot, Mohamed Atta. Ahmed also met with CIA Director George Tenet earlier that week. [24]
- Coincidentally, New York City Mayor Rudy Giuliani ordered the speedy removal of the debris from the fallen towers before sufficient samples could be obtained to determine the reason for the towers’ collapses. [25]
- Coincidentally, in the weeks prior to the attacks of September Eleventh, individuals placed financial bets that stocks of key companies impacted by the attacks would fall in the days after. One of these was Wirt Walker III, business associate of President Bush's brother Marvin. However, the FBI saw no need to investigate evidence of foreknowledge or Walker’s relationship to a flight school in Oklahoma where alleged terrorists trained. [26]
- Coincidentally, no one thought to interview any of the dozens of members of the bin Laden family before flying them out of America when all other flights were grounded, even though they were related to the accused prime suspect Osama bin Laden. [27]

- Coincidentally, the prime suspect for the attacks, Osama bin Laden, was reported in numerous books and articles to be a CIA asset, as a *Le Monde* headline declared: “The Most Dreaded Man of the United States, Controlled for a Long Time by the CIA.” [28]
- Coincidentally, a 47-story tower at the World Trade Center that had not been hit by a plane collapsed in under seven seconds at 5:20 p.m. on September Eleventh, and was reported on the BBC and CNN to have already collapsed as much as over six hours prior to its actual collapse. [29]
- Coincidentally, on the morning of the attacks over one hundred FDNY first responders reported they witnessed explosions in the Twin Towers, which they later testified to their superiors. But the 9/11 Commission omitted their testimony from its Report. [30]
- Coincidentally, Boston Logan Airport had no security cameras to verify that the alleged hijackers were in the departure lounges or that they boarded either American Airlines Flight 11 or United Airlines Flight 175, the flights that crashed into the Twin Towers. [31]

Mindy Kleinberg said to the 9/11 commissioners: “To me luck is something that happens once. When you have this repeated pattern of broken protocols, broken laws, broken communication, one cannot still call it luck.” [32]

What was going on? These and other myriad oddities related to the attacks linger. Reflecting on her experience of the 9/11 Commission, and those who testified, Patty Casazza made this observation. “Yes, they lied. They all lied. Whether consciously or unconsciously. It happened. Now we need to look into why they lied and what were the results of those lies.” [33]

At a symposium in West Hartford, Connecticut, in 2007, Casazza recalled “one of the reasons we still continued to fight for the commission, even as we knew it was a farce, is we wanted their words, their lies down on paper. We wanted to make them go ... through this exercise. And even if it came down to the annals of history, that the truth will come out.” She believes without the efforts of the September Eleventh families, “more people in the future might not run out of a burning building; that they actually might listen to a recording that says ‘You’re safe in the building. Remain seated, or you could be fired.’” Casazza counselled, “I think we have to start thinking for ourselves.” [34]

News stories that many Family Steering Committee members read prior to formulating their questions remained available at historycommons.org for years. But in December 2019, it was reported that the website was “offline indefinitely.” [35] For twenty years ordinary citizens have learned that if they have any interest in educating themselves by reading mainstream news stories (like those researcher and author Paul Thompson archived), it gets them marked as a “conspiracy theorist.”

The media’s framing of this phenomenon renders all the questions the September Eleventh families asked as the stuff of conspiracy. Consequently, society has, by default, agreed that no questions can be asked when a crisis occurs. It is as if we are all frozen in time, back in the

White House Press Room listening to press secretary Ari Fleischer tell us to “watch what we say” and “trust us.”

Democracy depends on a social agreement that we assume wins universal approval. That agreement is that there is such a thing as truth. In an open society, we know facts may be constrained and slanted in the midst of debate. However, truth is the ground from which the constraint and slanted speech begin. Democracy depends upon accountability. This requires citizens being able to distinguish truth from falsehood. In order to be able to tell truth from falsehood, there must be a social agreement that truth matters. If the ground of democracy is truth, the ground of autocracy is assertion. In an autocratic state, reality belongs to those who have enormous power to dominate and control others, including access to information.

For some, politicians must always be believed in a time of crisis: it is when a nation’s citizenry feels most vulnerable. Consequently, statements by politicians and government reports must be treated with near-religious veneration. Lest we forget Watergate and the Clinton-Lewinsky scandal: simply trusting the words of government leaders’ *carte blanche* is a poor template from which to fashion a democracy.

Therefore, the 9/11 Commission Report gave rise to the “9/11 Truth Movement.” Some in the movement recalled 20th Century political theoretician, Hannah Arendt, who observed that political leaders “determined to commit crimes find it expedient to organize them on the ... most improbable scale ... because the very immensity of the crimes guarantees that the murderers who proclaim their innocence with all manner of lies will be more readily believed than the victims who tell the truth.” [36] Others recalled President James Madison’s words to Thomas Jefferson in 1798, “perhaps it is a universal truth that the loss of liberty at home is to be charged to provisions against danger, real or pretended, from abroad.” [37]

Some in the 9/11 Truth Movement examined the possibility that elements within the government itself might be complicit in the events that led to the attacks, either by letting them happen or by making them happen. Others contend that the government was wrong in its explanations. But for many Americans this conclusion was unspeakable. French philosopher Rene Girard has noted it is a habit in human societies to find scapegoats when faced with a crisis. “Everywhere and always, when human beings either cannot or dare not take their anger out on the thing that has caused it, they unconsciously search for substitutes, and more often than not they find them.” [38] Are the events of September Eleventh applicable to Girard’s observation?

While some in the 9/11 Truth Movement presumed government complicity from the start, others remained neutral on the matter. But they wanted to verify government claims, demanding that the government produce evidence and make it public.

The Family Steering Committee’s advocacy posed questions and asked their government for accountability. They had no agenda; they sought only a trustworthy account of what happened. They wanted to know why the Pentagon failed to defend its citizens, despite its multi-layered defense system meant to guard the nation’s skies. They wanted to make America safe again.

The goals for the 9/11 Commission, as stated by Senators John McCain and Joe Lieberman, were

to “thoroughly investigate all evidence surrounding the attacks.” President George W. Bush and Commission Chairman Thomas Kean echoed these sentiments. However, the 9/11 Commission fell far short of a proper investigation, resulting in critique from the FSC.

Members of the Family Steering Committee were initially praised for holding the government to account. But when some continued to ask questions, especially after the 9/11 Commission issued their Report, they were attacked. FOX News commentator Bill O’Reilly called the Jersey Girls—Kristen Breitweiser, Mindy Kleinberg, Patty Casazza, and Lorie Van Auken—shrews, and suggested they pose for Playboy. In 2012, Patty Casazza looked back on their years of advocacy, saying, “I couldn’t believe the politics. We thought we were doing things to protect people, by finding out what happened and making sure it never happened again. It was a harsh lesson to learn.”

FSC member Monica Gabrielle said in 2012, “I don’t have time to think about 9/11 now. I put my life on hold for years and now it’s time to do something else.” Shunning publicity and invitations to comment on the experience of her activism, in 2012 Mindy Kleinberg declined to return numerous phone calls from reporters at the Newark newspaper the *Star-Ledger*. [39]

Two decades after 9/11, the unanswered questions the FSC asked remain valid. From the 9/11 families’ questions and research, we can obtain much-needed literacy about the events of September Eleventh. Such literacy is essential in a society too easily beguiled by headlines, media spin, and a history of forgetting. This includes forgetting that the 9/11 Commission was derelict and failed in its duty to “make a full and complete accounting of the circumstances surrounding the attacks.”

For some FSC members, the 9/11 Commission got it right. For others, the Report only raised more questions, especially about government nonfeasance. For them, the Report has contributed to a lack of trust in government, in particular concerning its lack of vigilance when protecting its citizens after being forewarned.

Fire Commissioner Christopher Gioia stated in an interview that he wants justice for his fallen comrades at the Franklin Square & Munson Fire Department. Gioia said the recording of Chief Orio Palmer’s radio dispatch is significant. “In it, he said that he only needed a couple of hoses to put out the small, isolated fires in the South Tower. If Orio had thought what he was encountering was going to be a danger, he would have gotten word to the other firefighters behind him to pull back and regroup.” Gioia explained that Palmer’s dispatch meant that he believed there was time for the firefighters below him to take an elevator to the 40th floor, climb up to the 78th floor, put out the fires, and tend the injured.

According to Gioia, it doesn’t make sense that we are “being told that steel columns melted from the fire, but a firefighter could reach the 78th floor and be unharmed,” by the heat. [40] Minutes before the South Tower collapsed, Palmer observed nothing to suggest that the building was weakening. Palmer was on a mission to rescue people. He only conveyed a sense that he was equipped to do whatever was needed. He expected other firefighters could reach him, and together they could put out the “small pockets of isolated fires.”

Questions are asked by those who want to ensure the story we tell does not bear false witness to what actually occurred. In late 2006, a sequel documentary to 9/11 Press For Truth was released, titled *In Their Own Words: The Untold Stories of the 9/11 Families*. In it, Lorie Van Auken stated: “our perception of what happened on September 11 is very different from the general public’s perception, I’d say for the most part.” Mindy Kleinberg said, “I believe the public is still uninformed about most of the issues that are surrounding 9/11. I think that they still believe in the myth that there was nothing that we could do about it. That we were caught unaware and that today we would be better prepared.” Patty Casazza said, “I still don’t think ... that I have come to terms with how September 11 happened, why it happened and who actually perpetrated these crimes that day.” [41]

These comments by Family Steering Committee members are a call to revisit our assumptions about what we’ve been told. Kristen Breitweiser is certain that those who perpetrated the attacks were “the 9/11 hijackers and al Qaeda.” But she wants “one of the largest co-conspirators of the 9/11 attacks, the Kingdom of Saudi Arabia,” to be made accountable for its involvement in a court of law. [42]

In America, most citizens are very patriotic. September Eleventh Family member Donna Marsh O’Connor recalled, “When I was a kid and I would be in assembly, I had this really horrible problem. I couldn’t sing any of the ‘America’ songs without crying. I was so infused with whatever this land was under me, that I grew up my entire life loving our paradoxes, loving our contradictions, loving even our sins. Because, here we could talk about them ... And still I loved this country. And no one will ever be able to call me anything but a patriot.” It is out of Donna Marsh O’Connor’s sense of patriotism, and desire for America to be its best, that she asks her questions about what happened on September Eleventh. Since the attacks, it has been her experience “that most people in this country do have some questions.” She told her audience: “the only resources we have ... are reasonable arguments. Go out into the world and be reasonable, and just ask the fundamental questions of that day.” [43]

Donna Marsh O’Connor’s challenge is one that readers do well to consider. It is one that is as relevant today as when she posed it to her listeners in 2006: to ask fundamental questions of this time in our society. Citizen advocacy, holding government leaders to account—and to vigilantly scrutinize their claims—should be seen as exemplary. One day, perhaps, vigorous inquiry will be welcomed as the norm when one’s nation faces a crisis and one’s leaders offer explanations.

Each person who acts to uphold the value of formal education, scholarship, and encourages civic literacy brings society closer to this goal. These qualities are necessary for citizens to think for themselves and examine evidence. Such literacy is required in order to uphold standards of judgment. And so, the September Eleventh families’ legitimate unanswered questions should be reflected upon, against the silencing odds.

The odds to be faced include the preference of many to rely on headlines and soundbites. Ridicule and ignorance trump critique and thoughtfulness, which deforms discussion. When someone notices problems with the official account concerning the events of September Eleventh, and tries to hold those in power accountable, it often results in being mocked, if not

outright indignation. “Questions? Questions!? What questions? How could the 9/11 families have questions?” In this way, the 9/11 families’ questions get labeled as “conspiracy theory.” Lorie Van Auken noted in her endorsement of *9/11 Unmasked* that there is an elephant in the room. The markings of a cover-up beg for further investigation, including plausible complicity on the part of some government officials. But defenders of the official narrative will brook no dissent from their assumptions. Daniel Patrick Moynihan once said, “Everyone is entitled to his own opinion, but not to his own facts.”

But in relation to the events of September Eleventh, Moynihan’s statement is turned on its head. Public discussion about what facts to agree on—and continuing calls for government accountability—predictably devolve into outrage and name-calling. Consequently, no one is allowed to air an opinion that others disagree with. And no facts can be introduced to create common ground if these facts vary from approved orthodoxy.

Considering the persistent, toxic climate that impairs civil discourse, it is a miracle that the Family Steering Committee ever got to ask their questions to the 9/11 Commission back in 2003. Or that their questions were, at the time, regarded as legitimate. The chances of a new inquiry twenty years after the attacks remain remote, with truth, the whole truth, and nothing but the truth, its chief casualty. In 1965 Trappist monk Thomas Merton wrote about “the presence of the Unspeakable.” He was trying to describe a form of evil he understood as a “void that gets into the language of public and official declarations at the very moment when they are pronounced.” The “Unspeakable” contradicted all the universal aspirations a generation pins its hopes on, making them ring hollow. For Merton, the “Unspeakable” signaled “a climax of absolute finality in refusal, in equivocation, in disorder, in absurdity which can be broken open again to truth only by miracle.” [44]

The possibility that evil, which we do not wish to see or acknowledge, may be enmeshed in the events of September Eleventh is something many do not wish to contemplate. The implications are too terrifying. Monica Gabrielle points out that the families “wanted a commission that was going to be independent, nothing to do with the government, because we were going to have to investigate the government.”[45] Instead, 9/11 Commission staff constructed a narrative for how the attacks happened and who was responsible prior to starting the inquiry. This didn’t put these matters to rest. The 9/11 Commission failed in its mandate, repeatedly leaving stones unturned, important testimony it received out of its Report, and ignoring the families’ questions.

Researcher Paul Thompson has called the events of September 11 “a scandal of tremendous proportions. It makes Watergate look small. There’s a strange lack of interest on both the left and on the right. Nobody seems to want to uncover the truth and just follow the leads wherever they may go. ‘Cause I think it goes to a lot of really damaging places.” [46]

What does one do when few are willing to become familiar with the unanswered questions of the 9/11 families—including the 9/11 Commission itself? One option is to shift the conversation. Sarah Van Auken’s play, *This Is Not About 9/11*, proposed an excellent way to honor those who were murdered on September Eleventh: to “do your research;” to unflinchingly explore the September Eleventh families’ questions. [47] History teaches us that the rush to reach conclusions about the story of record, usually based on assurances from those in authority, has

not served democracy well. It is understandable to want to trust what politicians tell us in the midst of a crisis. Yet, it is equally important to verify and scrutinize those claims. Such scrutiny may lead us to some damaging places. Or it may instill new confidence in those in charge.

Regardless, two decades after the attacks, taking seriously the September Eleventh families' unanswered questions is a task still waiting for the majority to tackle. It is a challenge given their lack of exposure, proper framing, and the fading memory of their plight by those entrusted to engage the public in informed discussion. In 2007, when asked "If you had one question you could now ask the commission what would it be?" Bob McIlvaine responded, "Who murdered my son?" Patty Casazza replied, "I'd like to know where Dick Cheney was on the morning of 9/11, and exactly what he was doing?" [48] Let there be a new inquiry in the full light of day.

Author's Note and Bio

In *Unanswered Questions* I dig into just a dozen of the questions the 9/11 Commission ignored. Beyond what I cover are many hundreds of unanswered questions posed by the families, and even more questions raised by broad group of citizens who comprise the 9/11 Truth Movement. I view the official account as far-fetched. The government does not even want citizens of Saudi Arabia to land in a courtroom to answer charges of complicity by 9/11 victims' relatives. The explanation given by former Attorney-General William Barr and Acting Director of National Intelligence, Richard Grenell, is that such a trial could "harm state secrets" and "imperil national security." What state secrets? How could such a trial harm national security? This is just one of many examples to suspect not only a cover-up, but complicity of actors within the U.S. government involved in the attacks of September Eleventh. As the short list of coincidences arising from probing into just a dozen unanswered questions shows, there are too many coincidences regarding what went wrong. The case for complicity on the part of actors in the United States government, as well as potential suspects in other foreign governments, is compelling. It's really what most citizens who look at this story closely are left with, including me. In place of the official account, which itself is a narrative of a conspiracy, I await the miracle of a truly independent investigation to call forth the still-living witnesses, and bring to trial potential conspirators, to give a full account of what happened and didn't happen on September 11.

Ray McGinnis is author of *Unanswered Questions: What the September Eleventh Families Asked and the 9/11 Commission Ignored*. He has previously authored *Writing the Sacred: A Psalm-inspired Path to Appreciating and Writing Sacred Poetry*. His forthcoming book explores the 2022 Freedom Convoy protests in Ottawa, the inquiry into the invocation of the *Emergencies Act*, and the inquiries' Report. He lives in Vancouver and is on Twitter @RayMcGinnis7.

End Notes

1. Patty Casazza, Monica Gabrielle, Mindy Kleinberg, and Lorie Van Auken, "September 11th Advocates Comment On The Impending Release Of Philip Shenon's Book," Press Release, February 4, 2008.
2. Philip Shenon, "Ex-Senator Will Soon Quit 9/11 Panel, Leaving Gap for Victims' Advocates," *New York Times*, December 5, 2003.
3. *The 9/11 Commission Report*, p. xvi.
4. Janette MacKinlay, Presentation at UC Davis, Davis 911 Truth, May 1, 2009.
<http://911blogger.com/news/2011-11-27/janette-mackinlay-speaks-uc-davismay-1-2009>
5. Richard Greene, "Interview with Senator Bob Kerrey: Former 9/11 Commission Member," Air America, March 2, 2008.
6. Daniele Ganser, "All of the Theories About 9/11 are Conspiracy Theories," 911Blogger.com, April 21, 2008.
7. "Paul Jay interview with Sen. Bob Graham: FBI Covered Up Role of Bandar and Saudis in 9/11 Attacks (Pt.1/2)," The Real News Network, September 11, 2016.
8. "Carie Lemack: Homeland Security Advisor Council Portraits," Department of Homeland Security <https://www.dhs.gov/medialibrary/assets/photo/29190> and "Carie Lemack - bio," Dataversity.net <https://www.dataversity.net/contributors/carie-lemack/>
9. "Carie Lemack Speaks to Al Jazeera," Al Jazeera, May 2, 2011.
10. Daniel Schorn, "Jersey Girls," CBS, September 6, 2006.
11. Susan Taylor Martin, "Of Fact, Fiction: Bush on 9/11," St. Petersburg Times, FL, July 4, 2004; And Jennifer Barrs, "From a Whisper to a Tear," Tampa Tribune, Sept 1, 2002.
12. Ray McGinnis, *Unanswered Questions: What the September Eleventh Families Asked and the 9/11 Commission Ignored*, (NorthernStar, 2021), 165-168.
13. Larry King Live, "Interview with Donald Rumsfeld," CNN, December 5, 2001.
14. Vince Gonzales, "The War on Waste, Eye on America," CBS, January 29, 2002. See also Milan Simonich, "Army History Unit Piecing Together Accounts of Pentagon Attack," *Pittsburg Post-Gazette*, December 16, 2001.
15. 9/11 Commission interview with Merchant and Goddard. "Hijacks were included in these exercises to exercise transition in Rules of Engagement (ROE)." See also Steven Komarow and Tom Squiteri, "NORAD Had Drills of Jets as Weapons," USA Today, April 18, 2004.

16. 9/11 Commission Memorandum for the Record (MFR) Interview: John Hawley, October 8, 2003. <https://catalog.archives.gov/OpaAPI/media/2610202/content/9-11/MFR/t-0148-911MFR-00608.pdf>.

See also, Interview of Michael Canavan, 9/11 Commission Public Hearing, May 23, 2003, http://www.9-11commission.gov/archive/hearing2/9-11Commission_Hearing_2003-05-23.htm

17. Mindy Kleinberg, "Statement of Mindy Kleinberg," National Commission on Terrorist Attacks Upon the United States, Public Hearing, Washington DC, March 31, 2003, 2-3. https://9-11commission.gov/hearings/hearing1/witness_kleinberg.htm. See also Dean Jackson, "The NORAD Papers IV: How NORAD Radar Operators Identified Aircraft Flying Over American Airspace on 9/11 And Its Implications," 911Truth.org, September 10, 2008.

18. Richard Clarke, *Against All Enemies*, (Free Press, 2004), 22.

19. Al Hunt, "General Myers Interview," Evans & Novak, CNN, April 6, 2002.

20. 1st Fighter Wing History Excerpt, 1st Fighter Wing History Office, Langley Air Force Base, Hampton, VA, July through December 2001: 61. Source date Sept. 11, 2001.

21. 9/11 Commission Team 8, "North American Aerospace Command Field Site Visit, Interview with CINC NORAD General Edward "Ed" Eberhart," Peterson Air Force Base, Colorado Springs (CO), March 1, 2004.

22. Bob Woodward, *Bush at War*, (Simon & Schuster, 2004), 4. See also, Barbara Slavin and Susan Page, "Attacks Throw Harsh Spotlight On CIA Director," USA Today, September 24, 2001.

23. Peter Jennings, "9/11 Rudy Giuliani Interview," ABC, September 11, 2001.

24. Richard Lei, "A Cloak But No Dagger; An Ex-Spy Says He Seeks Solutions, Not Scapegoats for 9/11," *Washington Post*, May 18, 2002.

25. Bill Manning, "Editorial: Selling Out the Investigation," *Fire Engineering Magazine*, January 2002. See also, Joe Calderone, "Firefighter Mag Raps 9/11 Probe," *New York Daily News*, January 4, 2002. "A respected firefighting trade magazine with ties to the city Fire Department is calling for a "full-throttle, fully resourced" investigation into the collapse of the World Trade Center."

26. Fran Shor, *Follow The Money: Bush, 9/11 and Deep Threat*, "Counterpunch, May 21, 2002. See also, Doug Greenburg, "FBI Briefing on Trading," Informal FBI Briefing to the 9/11 Commission, August 15, 2003.

27. Kathy Steele, "Phantom Flight from Florida," *The Tampa Tribune*, October 5, 2001.

28. Veronique Marus and Marc Rock, “The Most Dreaded Man of the United States, Controlled a Long Time by the CIA,” *Le Monde*, September 14, 2001.
29. Jane Standley, “Terrorism Attacks in US,” BBC, September 11, 2001. 4:20 EST to 4:30 EST. During a WTC Task Force Interview with Lieutenant Michael Cahill, EMS Division 6, Cahill reports he was at WTC7 when the building fell, after reporting to his superiors who had set up a triage station. The interviewer with the FDNY, Christopher Eccleston, told Cahill in reply “Building seven came down I believe around 4:25?” Oral History of Lieutenant Michael Cahill, EMS Division 6, WTC Task Force, October 17, 2001, 34.
https://static01.nyt.com/packages/pdf/nyregion/20050812_WTC_GRAPHIC/9110143.PDF.
9/11 family member, Matt Campbell corresponded with Reuters President and Editor in Chief, Steve Adler on September 23, 2014. Adler confirmed that someone “phoned in the information” to Reuters about the WTC7 building having collapsed before it actually collapsed, which Reuters passed on to the BBC. Additionally, on the morning of September 11, 2001, CNN was reporting that WTC7 had collapsed. Allan Dodds Frank, “Breaking News: America Under Attack,” CNN, September 11, 2001, 11:07 a.m.
<https://archive.org/details/cnn200109111053-1134>
30. Lorie Van Auken and Mindy Kleinberg, “Bloomberg & 9/11: Stonewalling the 9/11 Commission,” Letters to the Editor, *New York Times*, November 28, 2003.
<https://www.nytimes.com/2003/11/28/opinion/1-bloomberg-and-9-11-315494.html>
31. Doug Hanchett and Robin Washington, “Logan Lacks Video Cameras,” *Boston Herald*, September 29, 2001.
32. “Statement of Mindy Kleinberg,” 9/11 Commission, March 31, 2003.
33. “Patty Casazza Interview,” *9/11 Press For Truth*, Banded Artists/Standard Issue Films, 2006.
34. Patty Casazza, “9/11 Family Member Patty Casazza: Government Knew Exact Date and Exact Targets, 9/11: Family Members, First Responders and Experts Speak Out!,” 9/11 Symposium, Saint Joseph College, West Hartford, CT, November 3, 2007.
<http://911truth.org/911-family-member-patty-casazza-government-knew-exact-dateand-exact-targets/>
35. Erik Larson, “HistoryCommons.org – Revolutionary Site Offline,” Medium.com, December 2, 2019. <https://medium.com/@91erik/historycommons-org-revolutionary-app-may-go-offline-dd50143dcfb4>
36. Hannah Arendt, *The Origins of Totalitarianism*, (Schocken, 1951), 439.
37. James Madison, “Letter to Thomas Jefferson,” May 13, 1798.
<https://founders.archives.gov/documents/Madison/01-17-02-0088>
38. René Girard and Malcolm B. DeBevoise (translator), *The One by Whom Scandal Comes: Studies in Violence, Mimesis, & Culture*, (Michigan State University Press, 2014), 30.

39. Bob Braun, "Sept. 11 'Jersey Girls' Mostly Leave High-Profile Activism to Others These Days," *Star-Ledger, Newark, NJ*, September 9, 2012. See also, Charlotte Dennett, "What some 911 families have to say about the official story," Medium.com, September 16, 2021. <https://chardennettlaw.medium.com/what-some-911-families-have-to-say-about-the-official-story-e24a7d8d27d5>
40. Ray McGinnis interview with Fire Commissioner Christopher Gioia, Franklin Square & Munson Fire Department, January 25, 2020.
41. Ray Nowosielski, "Patty Casazza Interview," *In Their Own Words: The Untold Stories of the 9/11 Families*, Banded Artists/Standard Issue Films, 2006.
42. Kristen Breitweiser, "Iran and 9/11: Down the Rabbit Hole of Blame," *Huffington Post*, October 25, 2017.
43. Donna Marsh O'Connor, National Press Club, Washington DC, September 12, 2006. <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=-CrIDr-IEAA>
44. Thomas Merton, *Raids on the Unspeakable* (New Directions Publishing, 1966), 4.
45. Nowosielski, "Monica Gabrielle Interview," *In Their Own Words...*
46. Nowosielski, "Paul Thompson Interview," *9/11 Press For Truth...*
47. Margaret Eby, "The Daughter of a 9/11 Victim Makes a Powerful Statement," *hellogiggles.com*, Los Angeles, CA, September 11, 2014.
48. See note 34.